TRANSCRIPT - Herman Lytle, Fairview Oral History Project

Interviewee: Herman Lytle
Interviewer: Tealey Ellis and Judith Robertson
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Tealey Ellis: My name is Tealey Ellis and I'm a volunteer with the Fairview North Carolina public library oral history project that will be placed in the NC Room at the Pack Library in downtown Asheville, interviewing Herman Lytle at the Cook Robinson Home in Fairview, North Carolina.

Judith Robertson: I'm Judith Robertson, [same introductory as above; goes on to share the NC Room's mission, descriptions and disclosure].

TE: Let's start with telling us where you were born and maybe giving us your parent's names?

Herman Lytle: I was born in Memorial Mission Hospital in Asheville, North Carolina. My mom was Helen Edwards Lytle and my dad was Wayne Irvin Lytle. [Clears throat] July the 22nd, 1962 at 2:32 in the afternoon. That's when I showed up.

TE: That's when you showed up.

HL: Yep.

TE: Do you know where your parents were born?

HL: I know my mother was born in Yancey County. And I'm pretty sure my dad was born at home.

TE: In Fairview?

HL: In Fairview. Yes Ma'am.

TE: What about your grandparents on either side, their names and do--

HL: --My grandparents on my dad's side is Fred Fry Lytle and my grandmother on my dad's side was Eileen East Lytle. And my grandparents on my mother's side was Estory Silvers Edwards and her dad's name was Ransom Edwards and he was a pastor.

TE: Okay. Do you know where your father's parents, your grandparents came from?

HL: Yes, My granddaddy Fred Fry Lytle was born in Fairview. And he was raised, by the creek, at the foot of Cane Creek cemetery. And the house where Woof in the Woods is now, my granddaddy built that house, and that's where my dad and them moved to when my dad was in the second grade.

TE: Okay. Do you know any further back where your great- grandparents would have come from?

HL: I don't have any idea about that. I'm sure they're from Fairview. 'Cause they homesteaded, their property was at the foot of Cane Creek cemetery.

TE: Why did you choose to stay in Fairview? Did you ever go away and then come back?

HL: I never went away.

TE: Do you know why you chose to stay?

HL: I was gonna leave one time but I didn't leave because my son didn't want me to leave. I stayed to help my mom and dad, to help my grandparents. Anytime there was ever anything went wrong, like a car won't start or tractor won't start, or a faucet dripping, they always called me to come fix them. So I was the repair—I was the Maytag man. [laughter]

TE: Well family's a strong pull.

HL: Exactly. That's the only reason.

TE: Yeah. That's the best reason

HL: It is.

TE: You said you've lived here--

HL: --Fifty-five years. Well almost fifty-six. In three more weeks it'll be fifty-six years.

TE: You mentioned the house, that was built where the Woof in the Woods. What else can you tell us about that house?

HL: I never was in it. I mean I was in the house later on as a teenager, but that was way after it was gone out of the Lytle family. I know that my dad told me they moved in that house when he was in the second grade. That's all I can tell you.

TE: Do you know if there are any photographs around that someone might have of that house?

HL: If there is, I don't know who would have them because everyone on my dad's side is all deceased. So I don't even know who I would even go to. His mom and dad passed, his brother passed, and then dad passed. I don't know who would have any of those pictures. I do have an aunt in Ohio. I could call her and see if she's got any of them.

TE: That'd be really neat if they're available to record. That would be wonderful. What kind of work did you father do?

HL: He was a builder and my granddaddy was a builder.

TE: And where? The area in which they were building.

HL: They built in Fairview and Asheville. And a lot of people don't know this but my granddaddy on my dad's side of the family was one of the founding members of Trinity Baptist Church where Ralph Sexton preaches. Me and my brother and my daddy and my granddaddy spent countless hours out there building that first fellowship hall, for free. Many years ago, that was back in the early '70s.

TE: Very nice. Very nice. You said your father was also a builder, did he do any farming?

HL: Nope.

TE: None at all?

HL: Nope. Well we had a little garden at home but Daddy would rather go out and work and make money that way.

TE: So basically just a little veggie garden?

HL: Just for the family but my granddaddy… my dad stayed in homes, residential, but my granddaddy later on in life turned into a commercial builder and he went to work for R.L. Coleman and the last two jobs that my granddaddy worked on before he retired was A.C. Reynolds High School and the Civic Center in downtown Asheville. That's the last two jobs my grandaddy physically worked on. As a supervisor.

TE: Big projects for sure. What do you think were some of the best aspects and parts of living in Fairview? From childhood if you can and teen years and then adulthood.

HL: Back when I was a kid, you know, everything out here was kind of cool, calm and collected. From the time me and my brother was eight or nine years old we started making money, I mean we would go house to house and, "Do you need your lawn mowed?" That's how we made money. When it come time to buy your first car or whatever, you'd go and buy it. You didn't take out any loan. You don't ask Mom and Dad for no money. You knew everybody. There was never any crime whatsoever. Nobody ever locked their windows. Nobody ever closed their doors. And it was a lot more laid back. And then later on when we was in high school, everybody made fun on you if you lived in Fairview. Because Fairview was a farming town. There was like, several dairy farms out here and in the summertime a lot of us guys would go to those dairy barns and work and pick up hay or milk cows, or whatever. But when you got to high school they called us "plow boys". "Rednecks." Well, now all of them that made fun of us live out here (now). So I return the favor when I see them at Food Lion. [laughter all around]

TE: I can just imagine that. How do you think that Fairview has changed over the years?

HL: It's gotten too commercialized. You got people coming in here from out of town with lots of money. And, like, you know these dairy families. What happens is you get these people coming out here with all kinds of money. It's not for sale. But those people keep coming and keep coming and keep coming, and finally say, like, "Well I'll give you half a million dollars for it." That was the beginning of driving the acreage prices through the roof in Fairview. And that's happened a lot. It doesn't happen as much now. A lot of people coming in here from out of town that's got money, they won't take no for an answer. They paid the poor old bank building, the one that sits in front of the Food Lion. They paid $285,000 for a quarter of an acre. For the reason being, the property owner, "If you don't buy, this here bank's gonna move in. So a lot of people got played into this. So now you can't buy an acre out here for less than $10,000. Nowhere. That's on the side of a hill. But when I was a teenager, you could buy an acre of property out here for $1000 bucks.

TE: Wow.

HL: The property right beside me sold for $57,000 an acre.

TE: Quite interesting. Do you think-what do you think will happen to the face, if you will, of Fairview in the next ten to fifteen years?

HL: It's hard to say. Because with the land prices going up the way they have, the tax office are watching that, and they're like, so the taxes are going through the roof. So now a lot of the old timers they're

selling and getting out of here. Because of the tax value, they're getting to the point where they can't afford to keep their land. Fifteen years from now, Fairview may be full of breweries. Who knows? We've got two out here already. I hope that some of the younger kids, behind me, take the initiative to farm or do something, to keep farming alive. There's only two, no, three dairy farmers left out here in Fairview right now that sell milk to Bob Ingle and when I was kid and teenager working on the dairy farms, there was (counts out loud) eight dairy farms out here. So you're down to three. 'Course the EPA don't make it easy on any of 'em. If you have farmland, you have to have room for the cattle to roam. Well now, the EPA says they can't be in a creek. They can't be near a creek. So all these farmers are having to put in septic systems to catch all these things from the cattle. Can't be nowhere near a creek. That's more expensive. So that's driving some of the farming out too. That's what drove two of them out, the EPA. Some of them been doing it that way for hundreds of years, no you can't do it that way no more.

TE: You spoke about what I would call the sense of the community, the closeness, growing up and in your early adult years. Do you think that's changed? Overall in Fairview?

HL: No, I think we've still got that. You know it's just got…I'm not gonna say the attitude has changed. I guess the way of thinking has changed. I mean, when I was a teenager, even before then, if we found out that Derek Cook was gonna build a house (and he didn't have a whole lot of money) then the community gathered up and we'd come up here and we'd put this house up and put the roof on it and then let him have it from there. At no charge. We did that all the time. Nobody does that anymore. The community gatherings are still the same. But everybody's greedy. Nobody wants to help nobody do nothing unless there's money involved. Sometimes it can't be about the money.

TE: Right.

HL: Have you seen the Camp Good News? Up the road up here? I'm sure you've seen the sign--

TE: --I've seen the sign. But I don't know anything about it.

HL: There was a family. Not a family, there was a couple. Ed and Nancy Wilcox. Came in here from God knows where. I don't know where they came from, but they came in this area when I was in like the sixth grade. And they had a big Dodge van and they would park that Dodge van at Fairview School. When school let out at three o'clock, if you wanted to go to their place and play basketball or football or soccer, or lift weights or do whatever you want to do, it was all free. And then at the end of it they had like a thirty minute bible study, every day. Well we got to going up there and got to having fun and joining them and come to find out they bought that piece of property up there where Camp Good News is. It was called Maranantha and they wanted to do a Christian summer camp for the kids. They just barely had enough money to buy the property. So I got to talking to daddy, daddy got talking to his buddies and we all gathered and went up there and built that building. We built two of the dorms and the clubhouse up there for them, free of charge.

TE: That's amazing.

HL: I wish it would come back too, I really do. I can't tell you how many barns we built. If anybody heard of anybody building—I don't care if it was a doghouse-- anything, we'd all gather up, and all the women would come too and they'd all cook, you know what I mean? And at lunch time, there'd be a spread of food from here to the end of the road.

TE: I bet it was all good too.

HL: Nothing bought. [chuckling]

TE: For sure. You talked about earlier, Fairview changing and growing and that a lot of new people moving into to the area. Having lived here all your life have you seen any change in ethnic/racial backgrounds in the Fairview area?

HL: Not really that big compared to other communities you know. I mean….no. I haven't seen a big change, whatsoever. We haven't never said, "if you're a black person you live here and if you're a white person you live here. For some odd reason, the people who are predominately black live on Concord Road. Have you ever noticed that? Concord Road area is where (muttering in background) I mean nobody pushed 'em there, but that's just the way it's been my whole life.

TE: Is land cheaper there?

HL: Could be. Could be.

TE: Given what sounds like an extremely interesting history of you living in Fairview, and involvement in the community, what can you tell us about stories of unusual characters or legends that might be stories that have been told over time about Fairview? Like some places have ghost stories that they'll tell.

HL: There used to be a guy in Fairview, He was kinda like Otis. And his name with Jeb Owenby. He would help anybody do anything. He was a rather large man, he was about 6'7, 6'8" and probably go about 425 or 500 pounds. And strong. This is the strongest man I have ever seen in my life. And he helped a lot of people do a lot of things, both lit and sober. He was a well-known guy in the area. My granddaddy drove Oldsmobiles, he wouldn't drive nothing but Oldsmobiles, and he had a '66 Ninety-Eight Oldsmobile and he had a flat tire on 74. He went to get the jack to change the tire on the car and there wasn't no jack. It was in the middle of winter and Jebo come along and Jebo picked that car up—

TE: --Oh my word. That is interesting. [chuckling}

HL: They found him dead in his barn up on Garren Creek Road, and I was a fireman at the time. When we went to get him, it took about fourteen of us to get him out of that barn. That's how big of a man he was. He's a monster. And when you see him come in the hay field, he'd have three bales of hay in each hand. It wasn't one in each hand. [all around laughter]

TE: That's a lot of weight to carry.

HL: And then Guy Merrell, was probably one of the big legends of Fairview.

TE: His property abuts my property.

HL: Really?

TE: Yeah.

HL: On 74?

TE: Yeah.

HL: He owned that store right there, and that's where Jebo hung out a lot, at the store. I can remember going in there when I was a kid, that Guy Merrell always had a free piece of candy for kids. I didn't matter who it was. I mean that was, Guy Merrell's store was one stop shopping. I mean they had plumbing supplies, electrical supplies, boots, shoes, clothes, shirts, horse feed, hog feed. That was the only store you had to go to.

TE: Is that what's called Dale's now? Is that the same building?

HL: Yes. All those buildings down there belong to Guy Merrell. And the building where you see is called Dale's, that was the store. And the buildings over there on beside of the road is where the kept all the feed and seed, barbed wire, horse shoes, things like that. Everybody loved to go into Guy Merrell's.

TE: I met him once. He seems like a very nice gentleman.

HL: Well his son still lives there on the Merrell property. Johnny.

(Unknown male voice in background): That across the street from where you live?

HL: No, it's on down below the fire department. It's the next store on the left past the Fairview Fire Department. And then another person I'd have to say is a legend of W. Ledbetter. Was a very well known property owner in Fairview. In fact, I've been told that him and his mother at one time owned two thirds of Cane Creek Road. And they were like… W. Ledbetter's are who my mom and dad bought their property from. He sold his property and houses. There's many families that are in Fairview that wouldn't be in Fairview if it wasn't for W. Ledbetter.

TE: Does he still have family here?

HL: He does. The W. Ledbetter house is on Cane Creek Road and I'm not sure exactly what the address is but it's still there and his granddaughter bought that property and lives in that house. Andy Elliot is her name. It's a beautiful (house.) It's a big, two-story farmhouse. Huge. I can't remember the address. I'll get the address for you.

TE: What did you as a teenager and your buddies, your friends do for recreation and fun, activities, growing up in Fairview?

HL: We went camping.

TE: Where did you go?

HL: Wherever. We didn't go to no campground. We'd stay at this guy's house for a couple of weekends and then this guy's for another. In the summer I wasn't ever home. I mean we'd work during the week, we had to, but as soon as quittin' time hit Friday evening we'd go camping.

TE: What was the religious community like?

HL: Big. At the time when I was younger, most people went to Fairview Baptist. In fact there was a picture on Facebook a while back that somebody shared with me that was all of us in bible school. There were probably five hundred kids in that picture. It was back in the '70s.

TE: Wow, that's amazing.

HL: Yeah (chuckling)

JR: I didn't know there were that many children in Fairview, ever.

HL: That was probably the church everybody went to. I would say that's the most popular church. They had a lot going on up there for young people where a lot of the other churches didn't. I think that's why so many of us went there.

TE: You mentioned a Mr. Merrell's store, what other stores were in Fairview?

HL: Hallington's store. Well see when I was growing up, we wasn't poor but we wasn't rich. We would go out to eat every Friday night, but when we went out to eat we had to stop at Hallington's and fill up with gas. And Hallington's Store-do you know where the Garden Spot is on 74?

TE: Mm hmm.

HL: There's a shop straight across the street, looks like a four-bay shop? Garage? That's where Hallington's Store sat, right there where that garage is. And it was an Amoco station. So every Friday if you stopped there to fill up you got some kind of prize. We would stop there and fill up with gas there on our way to Buck's Drive-In. Every Friday night.

TE: And what was Bucks' Drive-In?

HL: Phew. That was The Spot. Buck's Drive-In is the spot that everybody went to, teenagers or not teenagers the weekend. It was like *the* drive-in.

TE: Was it a drive-in movie or drive-in restaurant?

HL: Drive-in restaurant.

JR: On Tunnel Road.

HL: If you want to see some pictures of Buck's Drive-In you go down to French Fryz down there in Skyland and on the back wall just before you go into his meeting room, there's a picture of Buck's there and there's a picture of Babe and Malloy's there. Those were the two hot spots when I was—

TE: Okay, I'm putting them on my list.

HL: That's the only pictures that I know of that somebody's got hangin' on a wall of Buck's. But that was our treat then, was going to Buck's on a Friday night.

TE: How often did you go into Asheville?

HL: Just on Friday nights. We went to Buck's Drive-In and when we left there, mama would want doughnuts. We'd go to Town House bakery on Biltmore Avenue and get doughnuts for mama. That was every Friday. We didn't start going to drive-in movies 'til I was a teenager. And the only reason we started going then was because Dreamland changed their prices to where it was like five dollars a car instead of ten dollars a person. When they changed it to that we started going to drive-in movies.

TE: When, to your knowledge did the monument makers and the stonework businesses get started in Fairview?

HL: Way before my time. I've got a friend of mine that just turned ninety and there was a rock quarry on his property and they sold rock out of that rock quarry in the 50s to Paul Nesbitt who laid the rock on the two story building right in front of Food Lion. That was Nesbitt's Store and that guy that owned that was a rock maker. And you probably need to talk to this guy. This guy could probably tell you things that--

TE: --What's his name?

HL: Johnny Henderson. He just turned ninety. Now he might have a lot of pictures. Because he was the very first fire chief in Fairview, North Carolina. Oh yes ma'am.

TE: Okay. Still in Fairview. What was the elementary school like?

HL: I loved it.

TE: What do you remember best about it, or worst---

HL: --We weren't poor like I said, but we had lunch money. But we would be in school and the trucks would deliver stuff to the school in those cases, a case of four one gallon cans is pretty heavy. So the ladies in the lunchroom didn't want to deal with it. We would come in the morning and move all those cases for them and put them where they needed to go and they always fed us for free. So we'd put our lunch money in the piggy bank.

JR: Was that Fairview elementary, the building that's there now?

HL: No. The one they tore down. The old school.

TE: Interesting. What do you remember about the classroom, what the teachers were like and--

HL: --All my teachers were elderly people. You know now you see teachers that look like they're fifteen. (laughter) All of our teachers-we didn't have any young teachers-there were all elderly people. Miss Cobble, she was my math teacher and I'm just guessing when she was teaching math, when I had her I would say she was at least sixty-five.

JR: Had they been there that long?

TE: Forever. I mean even taught my dad. [more laughter]

TE: With these elderly teachers did you have holiday celebrations of any kind that went on in the classroom?

HL: In the classrooms that we had, you celebrated every day. It all started out with the pledge of allegiance. It all started out with a prayer. That you don't hear of anymore. You don't do that whatsoever. And we honored all the holidays. Not that we're dumb and not that we're backwards but later on in life people got to talking about Hannukah and I thought "what in the world is Hannukah?" I hadn't heard that term until I got in to high school. And then you kinda have to learn these things like "oh, that's a different type of religion." But we didn't. We celebrated Christmas. Big time.

TE: Tell me about high school. Was it Reynolds? Tell us about that. What you thought of it and what kind of things would—

HL: --I hated it. I hated it.

TE: Why?

HL: I laid out more than I went.

TE: Just didn't want to go?

HL: I'd rather go out here and work and make money than go to school. 'Cause school's for losers man. I thought. (laughter) But, later on in life I realized that was a different--

TE: --do you have children?

HL: I do.

TE: Yeah. And did you like for them to lay out of school?

HL: Oh no, well I told 'em if I ever caught them laying out they'd be in more trouble than I ever was. But the problem was, what it is…Daddy taught us to work. And that's all I wanted to do. And I got my game together, I graduated. I was gonna quit school, 'cause I hated it so bad, high school, but Daddy said "you can go on and quit, I aint got a problem with it" but he said "you're gonna start paying your mom to do your laundry, you're gonna start paying me rent, you're gonna start paying for this and paying for that" and I thought [makes a funny sound] "I might want to finish school."

TE: Smart daddy.

HL: Oh absolultely, absolutely. So I finished school. I liked the environment. And I liked the high school 'cause it was a new building. But, once I got my driver's license I wanted to work. I didn't want to go to school, I wanted to work and make money.

TE: You mentioned a little bit earlier about how safe back in the day that Fairview felt to you and to the other folks about not closing windows and doors, do you feel safe living in Fairview now?

HL: Not as safe as I was. I lock my doors at night now.

TE: Do you know why?

HL: Yeah. My house has been broken into three times. Without me there. But I lock my doors at night and I go to bed with a pistol every night. So I somewhat feel safe but I wouldn't dare leave my doors unlocked anymore.

TE: Well, I can understand that. When 74 was widened what kind of effect do you think that has had had on the community.

HL: That just put the green light on everybody moving out here and doing anything they want to do. We never had a Food Lion 'til that happened. We never had a brewery 'til that happened. And life was kinda simple without all that stuff. But don't get me wrong, I'm in Food Lion five times a week. It's just because it's convenient. Well no, we're in Food Lion five times a week 'cause Hallington's Store and Guy Merrell's Store ain't here no more.

TE: Was there any displacement of people for the 74 to be widened? Was property sold?

HL: Some of it was. Let's see---

TE: ---But not much?

HL: I don't' know of anybody that was displaced. No. There wasn't anybody that was displaced. There was some people arguing about what they got paid for their property.

TE: I wanted to ask if you have any stories from an older generation such as a grandparent concerning maybe their early days about what is was like to live in Fairvierw? What was the transportation and--

HL: I can remember my granddaddy talking to me about going into Asheville, driving into Asheville and it was a dirt road. Having to ride the bus to get to Asheville before he got a car. I'm thinking a bus? You know the buses now don't even run out here.

TE: I didn't think they did. I didn't think I'd ever seen one.

HL: But apparently back in the day the Asheville buses ran out to Fairview.

TE: Overall what kind of community gatherings do you remember? Unrelated to church. I mean there were homecomings and that kind of—but what other kinds of community gatherings do you remember?

HL: In the early 70s' my dad joined the Lions Club. There used to be a Lions Club in Fairview and it probably had thirty members. So when dad joined the Lions Club, me and my brother did too and about three times a year we would have a fish fry and dear Jesus [laughter] there would be hundreds of people coming to eat that food. At the community center, at the time is the little grey building as you're coming out of Food Lion's parking lot. To get on Laurel Jackson Road. That little silver/grey building right there was the community center. And they would be standing room only.

JR: Where did the fish come from?

HL: You know Lad's Fish Market.

JR: Really? Lad's. Downtown on North Lexington.

HL: Yes ma'am.

TE: Oh wow, it's still around.

JR: No.

HL: Sure did. That's where the fish came from. We would do that three times a year. They would use it as a fundraiser but the community didn't know it was a fundraiser. 'Cause we wasn't begging for money, we would just put a donation jar out there and if they put money in, fine, and if they didn't put money in, fine. One time a year we would take over the ballfield of Fairview School like the second week of June we'd have a horse show. Dude. I didn't know how many people came to a horse show. There would be in a weekends time maybe 300 people.

TE: And what did horse show consist of?

HL: Just like judging a car, best in show, best trained, things of that nature. We had several trophies they'd give out; hard to remember all the trophies. That was a big thing in Fairview. Back when I was

real little the Fairview Athletic Association used to have donkey basketball games, all the time and that was a big crowd pleaser.

TE: I don't know what a donkey basketball game is.

HL: You need to go to one to witness how much fun. What it is was, they'd bring a bus load of donkeys into a gymnasium and the people that train them know how to ride them and how to get them to do certain things. But then when you get on, it keeps you throwed off. And the object of the game is to play basketball, so the object of the game is to carry the basketball down and score agoal.

TE: Are you pulling my leg?

HL: I am not pulling your leg. They still go on today, just not around here. But that was the big crowd pleaser back in the day. Everybody would call my dad, "there's a basketball game coming up. Are you gonna---" 'cause he was one of the ones that would try to ride it. Yeah. And the last one of those that I can remember was probably like in '77, somewhere. They had them right in the community center. If you've never seen one you need to go watch one.

TE: Do you have any knowledge of any traumatic events, such as fires, floods or major accidents in Fairview?

HL: There was a big flood in Fairview. It was '77 or '78 there was a big flood in Fairview. Cane Creek Rd and from Gap Creek Road Tweeds Chapel Church was all washed away, but one lane. If the flood would happen today, Cane Creek middle school would all be under water.

TE: That's hard to imagine.

HL: Yeah. Gap Creek Road comes into Cane Creek Road like this. And there used to be a home that set right there and when it came to that flood it washed that house away.

TE: And what year?

HL: It was '77 or '78. [man commenting in background that there was a "big flood in Reynolds that same year"] Probably was. It was in November and we had so much rain, like we've had now, but it never stopped. I went to school with a kid that lived in that house that washed away. And luckily, that family climbed up on the bank when the water started rising. There was a big bank behind that house and luckily that family climbed up on that bank and they seen that house leavin'.

TE: Hard to imagine.

HL: Awful.

[Man in background: Were you at Jamie Clark's barn when that---]

HL: ---Oh yeah.

Man: That was one of the times---

HL: ---that barn fire, we was up there three days.

Man: I was there one night---

HL: ---Yeah. And then there was a house fire in Sugar Hollow, we was there for three days. But the problem with the house in Sugar Hollow was, it was a huge house, but the problem with it was it had been added onto so many times we couldn't vent the house. So when you got a hole cut through the roof you thought it was vented, but it wasn't vented 'cause there was another roof under it. It used to be the old Jamison house but that wasn't who lived there then. [Man again, commenting]

HL: They got a barn up there with a basketball court on top of it.

TE: When were you a firefighter?

HL: I've been out of it since 1996 and I joined in 1984.

TE: During that time did you all act as first respondents also?

HL: Yes ma'am.

TE: And were you paid or volunteer?

HL: I was a volunteer.

TE: Who was the chief then?

HL: Ben McGuinn was the first chief and then Ronald Hudgins when I left.

TE: We talked earlier about community events and activities, I'm told your wife is in charge of--

HL: --It's my sister-in-law. Well, me and my sister-in-law and four or five other people was on the board of the community.

TE: Okay. And the community craft activity that takes place each year? So you're all involved in that? When did that start?

HL: About ten years ago. Maybe eleven. It's been a while. It keeps getting bigger and bigger.

TE: I've gone a few times since I've been here. A whole lot of people show up.

HL: They do.

TE: Is there anything else about living in Fairview that we've not touched on that you'd like to share with us?

HL: Not really. I wish it was back to simple. I wish I could leave my doors unlocked. That's days gone past. But I need to get you hooked up with Johnny. You was asking about rock masons, he was hauling rock back in the 50s before he was in the Navy.

TE: Yeah it'd be interesting to talk to him.

HL: I'll give you his cell phone number and you call him, 'cause he's a character.

TE: Alright, and I can tell him that you---

HL: --I can call him and tell him. He's ninety and he can tell you things he did when he was twenty.

TE and JR: Well we need to talk to him. (laughter)

HL: He's not originally from Fairview but they moved into Fairview like in '49 or '50. And I didn't even think about him 'til we got to talking about rocks.

TE: Judith do you have any other questions? Derek? [Derek responds in background]

JR: We have, we just haven't asked the right questions

HL: If I think of anything I'll write it down. My memory is not as good as it used to be.

TE: Hey, we all experience that every now and then.

HL: Well, my head went through the windshield of a car back in 1986. It's like, things I've done from '86 on I don't have any problem remembering. But things that happened from '86 back I have a hard time remembering.

TE: Well Mr. Lytle we appreciate your coming today and you have given us a lot of wonderful info.

HL: I don't mind, when you talk to Johnny, I wouldn't mind bringing him to you. If you want to do it here I'll drag him up here. He was one of the ones that was going door to door beggin' for money so Fairview could buy their first fire truck.

TE: Oh, really? God bless him. We'll look forward.

Derek: Did you and any of your pals ever get in your car and coast all the way down the hill that was--

HL: --yeah.

JR: Tell us about that.

Derek: I was talking to an old fellow. He helped me out when I was out of gas. He took us to get gas and he told us they would start on the top of the hill and they wouldn't put the gas on again until they got to the golf course.

HL: Oh yeah. We used to see how far you could go, man, and this was way before the four-lane. There was a guy that lived out here on Garren Creek Road that had a '64 Chrysler. He could put that thing in neutral and go further than the golf course. He could turn left at the golf course and keep rolling.

JR: He must've had a New Yorker, it was really heavy. [laughter all around]

HL: But the furthest I could get would be like where I-40 is, so my car didn't coast as far. But now on the weekends after I turned into a teenager, on the weekends that's all we did was race. We would drag race in Bottoms, Lynch's Bottom? we had it marked off a quarter mile and marked off an eighth of a mile. We would drag race up there every weekend.

Derek: Where was that?

HL: That long straightaway like you're going into Lake Lure on 74. Then we got tired of drag racing, then we started racing up the mountain. See who could go up to the top of the mountain and back down the quickest. Thank God I worked at a garage that sold tires. I put tires on the back of my car every Monday morning. [more laughter] Every Monday.

Jr: Did anybody ever get killed?

HL: No. We had a couple of people wreck but nobody got killed. We had one guy, we had to pick his teeth out of the dash, but nobody ever got killed. [laughter] Yeah, every Monday morning I had to put tires on the back of- I had a '67 Buick Grand Sport and a '69 Chevelle? But whatever car I drove up the mountain that weekend I had to put a set of tires every Monday morning. Mama and daddy, we had a big covered porch and we had a big swing on porch and as I'd come through Fairview if I was in my Chevelle and coming from in front of Angelo's they could hear me. Daddy'd be like, "yep Herman'll be here in a minute." And I would, I'd show up at the house 'cause like where Angelo's is as far as driving to my mom and dad's house it's a long drive. But as a crow flies it's not even a mile. They live on Cane Creek Road. That's where I grew up was on Cane Creek Road. As the crow flies it's just right through the woods. We had a big reputation for drag racing. But we never got caught. We always had somebody sittin' and watchin' for a car to come and now, these guys are making money. That show, Street Outlaws? They're doing exactly what we was doing back in the '70s. Yeah, it's televised, they're making money. We don't do that no more. You can't coast down that hill now. That dern trooper will be sitting over there at that turn lane waiting on you. [Derek speaking softly]

JR: …the traffic lights. So you started at Mine Hole Gap or did you start at Hickory Nut Gap?

HL: Started at Mine Hole Gap. Just put it in neutral and let her go. My mama didn't know how to drive a straight drive. So when my daddy was going to teach her how to drive a straight drive, he took her to the top of Hickory Nut Gap and then daddy got out and started walking. Mama asked Daddy "How am I supposed to get home?" He said, "You'll figure it out."

JR: That's tough love.

TE: That is tough love. [laughter all around]

HL: She stopped and picked him up. I said, "Why'd you pick him up?" Yeah, that's how he taught her to drive straight shift. I said at least he didn't get out going up, at least he got out coming down. That's the easy part. That was the good old days then.

JR: These are great stories.

TE: These are great stories. Maybe we'll hear some more of them when we get together with Mr. Henderson.

HL: Oh you'll hear a lot from him. I'll tell you what, man, he's like my second dad. He was in the Navy during the war and he was on a ship that was a minesweeper. He showed me his w2 form for the Navy, for one year. I couldn't believe it. One hundred and ten dollars, for a year. I said, "you're crazy" and he said, "no I'm not. They provided me with all the food and all the clothes I needed.

Derek: And he didn't have anywhere to spend it.

HL: That's right. He's got a house that he built on Davis Road in Fairview and that house is built from trees that they cut down on the property. Every board in that house. He's got one bedroom that's got sassafrass tongue-and -groove paneling.

JR: Oh that's rare.

HL: They had a sawmill. His dad had sawmill up there; they'd cut--every room has got real paneling on it.

JR: Well, I look forward to hearing from you, and then I'll get in touch with Mr. Henderson.

TE: Sounds really like a lot of potential doesn't it?

[more chatter about getting in touch with Johnny Henderson; his phone number and schedule]

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by Jan Wolff on 19 December 2019.